

Undine's nature

The Urth list — 17 messages, 6 voices, 17 Oct 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6071>

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Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 17:36

There is some interesting convergence of a couple threads which might warrant a new thread title.

David Stockhoff: I like the idea of Baldanders giving himself gills. But then who and what is he? Why is he doomed to grow so large? Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get our assumptions straight.

This is an interesting new idea I hadn't ever heard before. It is a bit cryptic how Baldanders started as a small man suddenly appearing lakeside a couple generations ago. Could he have been like Idas then? There is some other tangential evidence to support this theory I think, which can be seen in a further consideration of undines, below.

I also kinda lean against the idea. Idas is an adolescent undine but she still appears as a tall slender human. Moreover, the words of Dr. Talos suggest Baldanders created his doctor to maintain all the delicate hormonal adjustments which allow his growth to continue. Of course I think Dr. Talos is disingenuous on how Baldanders can breathe underwater but for some reason I am inclined to believe him regarding Baldanders' growth and the implication that it is unnatural.

Gerry Quinn: Juturna is not human, I believe, nor fish either. She has been created or spawned by one of the sea monsters.

I agree. Specifically Abaia, if we may believe the dream-undines' claim of being his daughter-brides.

That term is surely meant to provoke our instinct for incest revulsion but when you have a giant creature who can reproduce asexually and who may be sequentially hermaphroditic like Tzadkiel, it starts to seem a bit more natural (as incest was the natural mating pattern of the pagan god pantheons).

Moreover I think the end of RttW supports this idea. Great Scylla is shown budding off a small army of female-shaped beings. What else could this be other than a production of undine-like beings. Actually I sort of think Great Scylla may actually BE Abaia. Scylla is associated with snakes and fish and Abaia is an eel. Fish-snake-eel provides a reasonable connection from which meaningless gender pronouns should not divert our attention.

A question which seem always danced around be never addressed is regarding who is Typhon's daughter really, Scylla or Cilinia? Though the process isn't clear to me, I do have a strong sense that his daughter has a dual essence. Perhaps there was cloning involved but I think one iteration of her died as a girl, but another entered the sea and kept growing into the monster which became Great Scylla (and perhaps Abaia). Somewhere in Long Sun there is mention of the planet Scylla herself ruled.

Jeff Wilson: His (Severian's) water breathing after the flood I believe is a mark of kinship with Juturna, along with her ability to access the corridors of time. In fact, I would say that it is as likely that Juturna is Sev's sister as Merryn. "Where is Severian's sister?" "She's right there, 100 feet tall! How could you miss her?"

I've heard that theory before but it is quite a minority opinion I think. I think it has merit because there is the sexual attraction between Severian and Juturna which I find a necessary requirement for identifying Severa. I think the complete absence of sexual attraction, along with some other evidence, rules out Merryn .

So, I'd at least consider Juturna a likely relative of Severian's. I still think Jolenta is the best candidate for being Severa. We are conspicuously not given her name when she is a waitress and her lack of history allows her to have been an expelled witch. Jolenta could be a stage name and while she doesn't have much of a sex drive, she seems more attracted to Severian than to any other man. (it is indirect but something about the buxom, red haired appearance of Jahlee in RttW seems like a clue to Jolenta and away from Merryn also).

I don't recall anything to suggest the skull Severian finds after the flood is literally his own.

I don't find it a strong conclusion either but some do and my comments on the matter were meant for them.

larry miller — 17 Oct 2011, 22:40 · in reply to Lee Berman

interesting idea. I also agree with you that Severa is Jolenta.

On 10/17/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 23:00 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

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Can they reproduce asexually? I don't recall that we are told how they reproduce.

Actually I lean towards the idea that the undines are created by the sea monsters as detachable organs which are used for various functions: communicating with humans, going to war, and probably reproduction too. Perhaps there are male undines which serve as sea monster sperm, or perhaps the sea monsters directly fertilise the undines. Abaia may of course be capable of self-fertilising, which is a form of asexual reproduction I guess.

A question which seem always danced around be never addressed is regarding who is Typhon's daughter really, Scylla or Cilinia? Though the process isn't clear to me, I do have a strong sense that his daughter has a dual essence. Perhaps there was cloning involved but I think one iteration of her died as a girl, but another entered the sea and kept growing into the monster which became Great Scylla (and perhaps

Abaia). Some wherein Long Sun there is mention of the planet Scylla herself ruled.

I've never seen the question asked. I'll go with the one that was human and that Typhon had scanned. Cilinia obviously made a bargain with Scylla, probably looking for help overthrowing her father and ruling herself, and identified with her, even seeing herself as something like Scylla, though human sized.

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I think it has merit because there is the sexual attraction between Severian and Juturna which I find a necessary requirement for identifying Severa. I think the complete absence of sexual attraction, along with some other evidence, rules out Merryn .

Ruling out what most consider the most likely candidate for Severian's putative sister, simply because he does not note that he is sexually attracted to her, seems a perverse reading in every sense of the word. (Most certainly the converse does not apply, or half the women of the Commonwealth must be Severian's sisters.)

So, I'd at least consider Juturna a likely relative of Severian's. I still think Jolenta is the best candidate for being Severa. We are conspicuously not given her name when she is a waitress

What need is there for it? Why would Severian know the name of the waitress anyway? I doubt they wear name badges in the inns of Nessus. And if Severian was speaking to the waitress, it would simply make it harder for Wolfe to have her appear later as another person without comment from Severian.

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her to have been an expelled witch. Jolenta could be a stage name and

I think the name is probably derived from Jolie — it suggests someone who has been made beautiful, or wants to become beautiful. Of course she might have changed it or taken a stage name.

while she doesn't have much of a sex drive, she seems more attracted to Severian than to any other man.

At the risk of encouraging you, she also apparently sleeps with Dorcas, who would be her gran. But as a means of identifying long-lost sisters, the heuristic still seems thin.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 23:05 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 7:00 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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I wouldn't assume that Sev is not attracted to Juturna, nor that an attraction is not returned. However, consummation seems impossible---make of that what you will.

Lee Berman — 18 Oct 2011, 02:16 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry QUinn: Can they reproduce asexually? I don't recall that we are told how they reproduce.

Given what we are shown of Tzadkiel, The Mother and Great Scylla I think we can deduce it.

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Sounds like budding, which is a form of asexual reproduction. Again, we see that sort of budding of useful detachable parts rather explicitly in Tzadkiel, The Mother and Great Scylla. It also sounds like the self-multiplication mythological Pan/Faunus engages in. Perhaps we are actually in complete agreement on this issue, just using different terms.

Jolenta could be a stage name

I think the name is probably derived from Jolie — it suggests someone who has been made beautiful

And since she is only called that name after she has been made beautiful for the stage, I think that lends further credence to the idea that Jolenta is a stage name. We are given the names of many characters less important than the waitress. Then there is the issue of her hair color....

she also apparently sleeps with Dorcas, who would be her gran.

Correct. I perceive the incest curse to extend across all members of Severian's family. This says something about his relationship to Agia and Agilus. (and explains the impossible mutual sexual attraction Severian and Jolenta feel for each other at Ctesiphon's Cross)

Ruling out what most consider the most likely candidate for Severian's putative sister, simply because he does not note that he is sexually attracted to her, seems a perverse reading in every sense of the word.

This is a perverse story written by a perverse author. If your world/literary view still directs you to think of WOlfe as a very chaste and sexually virtuous author after all these years I think that is to your eternal credit and speaks highly of your own morally upstanding nature.

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 12:38 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

A question which seem always danced around be never addressed is regarding who is Typhon's daughter really, Scylla or Cilinia?

Typhon was human, so I pick the human one.

Though

the process isn't clear to me, I do have a strong sense that his daughter has a dual essence. Perhaps there was cloning involved but I think one iteration of her died as a girl, but another entered the sea and kept growing into the monster which became Great Scylla (and perhaps Abaia).

I don't such a theory is tenable, because Cilinia was scanned and uploaded to the Whorl at a young age. Since she clearly already identified with or thought herself akin in some ways to the monster Scylla, it seems most probable that Scylla was already fully developed at that time.

I suppose it is possible that Cilinia's emulated personality in Mainframe somehow stayed in communication with Scylla throughout the centuries of travel. But for Scylla to somehow develop from Cilinia, apart from being a flagrant contradiction of biology, also contradicts the beans story which suggests that the sea monsters are of extra-terrestrial origin (as does the existence of the Mother).

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 12:49 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

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I really don't understand your obsession with this supposed "incest curse". The women Severian is attracted to comprise a remarkably even social, geographic and biological cross-section of the inhabitants of the Commonwealth, which as well as being convenient to an author wishing to describe the realm, probably also has symbolic value given that Severian will eventually become Autarch, and then the Epitome of Urth. That they are all related to Severian — and therefore related among themselves — seems nigh on unbelievable.

And **everybody** is attracted to Jolenta. That's the point of her.

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Perverse it may be, but that doesn't mean that every perversity imaginable must necessarily be omnipresent in the text. Extraordinary hypotheses require extraordinary evidence.

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Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 12:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

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It didn't stop the giants in The Wizard Knight. The converse would at least be less painful for the female involved, even if not perhaps very satisfying.

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David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 13:32 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/19/2011 8:55 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>

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Perhaps giants of any kind lack strong sexual dimorphism for fundamental biophysical reasons. Thus, they have proportionally small genitals that are more compatible with those of nongiants.

Problem solved!

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 13:40 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/19/2011 8:38 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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It occurs to me that creatures who enter the ecosystems of alien planets, especially as "beans," would do well to make use of the DNA of native plants and animals to survive and to compete with them. This would explain the apparent mixed human-nonhuman geno/phenotype as well as fitting the chaotic, cancer-like growth of the monsters.

And it would provide a corporeal counterpart to the mental/spiritual imitative cannibalism of inhumi and alzabos.

Marc Aramini — 19 Oct 2011, 15:18 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Wed, 10/19/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Undine's nature

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 5:49 AM

From: Lee Berman

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Perverse it may be, but that doesn't mean that every perversity imaginable must necessarily be omnipresent in the text. Extraordinary hypotheses require extraordinary evidence.

- Gerry Quinn

I agree with Gerry on this one. One perversity does not imply universal perversity. Blood calling to blood in the lake of birds is fine, but I never bought the "golden"?glow indicating relationship thing Borski brings up for the simple reason that Sev himself has black hair.

The huge socio economic diversity of the women make it impossible for them all to be related to him. Rather, individual descriptions should show genetic relationship: tall, thin waist but not weak looking, dark hair, pale. Pia is the only one who matches that description as far as I remember. — The only reason we are looking for Severa is the fact that names like that are usually paired in the common wealth, but one case of incest does not imply ALL cases of incest. Wolfe blurs identity of one or two characters, but we shouldn't assume that all identities are completely blurred. Malrubius is not Paleamon, Juturna is not Dorcas. Inire is not everybody, though he might be somebody, or, with enough evidence, two somebodies.

Lee Berman — 19 Oct 2011, 15:20 · follows Marc Aramini

David Stockhoff: Is the term "angels" used here in its sense of "agents of good"? I'm not sure I see the slightest hint of morality or ethics anywhere in Briah, on any "side." Then again, I don't see angels themselves as particularly "good."

Hm. Yes. I agree Hiero-types, like their earth angel analogs, do a lot of cruel, even horrific things.

We understand that Judeo-Christianity has demonized and uglified the deities of competing religions for doing the same sorts of things their own God and angels have done or sometimes for doing things which are not harmful but just culturally offensive to Judeo-Christians.

I think Wolfe has done this in the BotNS. One side possesses superhuman beauty while the other side is (imho) old and shrivelled or gigantic and monstrous. Since both sides do horrible things I think we are meant to understand that we/Severian are supposed to choose a side based not on our own personal moral judgements but rather on an intuitive feeling of "rightness". In other words we (and Severian) must suspend our horror at the bad things we see

happening around us and rely on faith that the "right" side will ultimately produce the best result.

Again, I don't see any worthwhile distinction between fallen and unfallen technology. Both processes are unspeakable perversions but it is their users (and uses) that distinguish them.

I agree. Where we may disagree is that I tend to think that the Autarch's potion is, like alzabo, a product of the Cumaeans and provided by Father Inire. And these characters are not (anymore) on the side of the hiero-types.

But I could be wrong. Perhaps the hiero-types do provide the autarch his potion and Severian's serial memories are important in his ascension to the New Sun. Maybe there is some discontinuity. Perhaps Wolf was thinking the Autarchy and the memories were important in writing the first four books. But in UotNS, the memories and the Autarchy seem useless at best and even a bit of a hindrance to his New Sun function. (for example, the mutineers use a mock Autarch image in an attempt to divert Severian from his New Sun function. The scene is cryptic but that's how I read it).

It occurs to me that creatures who enter the ecosystems of alien planets, especially as "beans," would do well to make use of the DNA of native plants and animals to survive and to compete with them. This would explain the apparent mixed human-nonhuman geno/phenotype as well as fitting the chaotic, cancer-like growth of the monsters. And it would provide a corporeal counterpart to the mental/spiritual imitative cannibalism of inhumis and alzabos.

I think this is Marc Aramini's position regarding the origin of Neighbors and Inhumis. I'm not sure if he finds the process applies when aliens return to Urth. I tend to agree with the idea in general.

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 16:10 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/19/2011 11:20 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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You're right about that. And it may be that certain tech reaches Urth by certain pathways---in fact this is necessary. There isn't a galactic Amazon where you can order anything you want, like the shipping guild in Dune.

But the cacogens don't forbid anything. They know about the alzado and allow it and don't seem to care. So even if Inire is "fallen" and he devised the Autarchic transfer procedure (quite likely given his position), it doesn't seem to offend or go against the hierodudes' sensibilities.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Oct 2011, 16:31 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Wed, October 19, 2011 08:40, David Stockhoff wrote:

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Don't forget the Pythagorean notion that beans are vessels for transmigration, and possibly reincarnation.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 16:38 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/19/2011 12:31 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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On 10/19/2011 1:11 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Ah, so it's beans as interstellar mind transfer technology. Interesting idea. If anything, it seems even more compatible with the idea their of absorbing and co-opting native DNA on planets they "colonize," since minds naturally need bodies. And yet beans also grow into plants (in the right conditions).